

Abstract 543

TITLE: Using Key Informant Interviews as a Means of Conducting a Needs Assessment and Developing HIV Outreach Prevention Programs for Women At Risk in Utah

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ISSUE: One of the central goals of any prevention program is to ensure that the target population is effectively reached as well as the characteristics of the group being well defined.

SETTING: The focus of the project is women at risk in Salt Lake County, Utah.

PROJECT: The purpose of this project is to explore the beliefs, behavior, and knowledge about women who use drugs and are therefore at risk for HIV. The project is modeled after a Community Identification Process, which is a qualitative research strategy that is characterized as a rapid assessment method (Tashima 1996). In developing the external knowledge base of the population, key informant interviews were conducted in three tiers from a community level to the target population. The rapid assessment surveys: 1) the "system" that deals with the issue of substance using women on a community level, 2) the "interactors" who work or provide services for this population, and 3) women who use drugs. In addition, a focus group of women who traded sex for drugs/money, escorts, and exotic dancers was also conducted to gain further insight of women involved in commercial sex work.

RESULTS: Four systems representatives, 10 interactors, and 26 women were interviewed. A key informant was hired as an outreach worker to facilitate reaching women at risk and educating the staff regarding drug use practices. The "system" interviews consisted of the state health department HIV prevention program, Salt Lake County Substance Abuse Division, mental health system, and local government's views on prostitution. The "interactor" interviews included homeless outreach and a social detoxification program, infectious disease and emergency medicine doctors, homeless healthcare providers, vice detective, homeless youth resource center, methadone treatment counselors, addiction recovery and mental health counselors. The 26 women interviewed had a mean age of 33 year old (age range = 18-52). The mean education level is 12th grade. The ethnic breakdown of participants is as follows: 69% Caucasian, 7.6% African American, 3.8% Hispanic, 3.8% Native American, and 15% mixed ethnicity. Sixty-nine percent reported history of physical, sexual, or mental abuse. Another 69% were diagnosed with a mental illness typically depression. Although 92% of the women were partners of injection drug users (IDU), only 62% had a history of IDU. Other risk behavior for HIV included: 46% reported history of trading sex for drugs or money, 42% reported using condoms with regular partner, and 50% of the women were diagnosed with STDs.

LESSONS LEARNED: The assessment revealed that the target population was highly segmented and the scope was redefined. The study delineated certain attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors within each of the segments. An IDU street outreach, and HIV prevention education program for incarcerated women was developed at the suggestions of the women. Having a culturally appropriate outreach worker was instrumental in the success of the program.

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